

Trends in Cancer Information Seeking: Sources, Experiences, and Efficacy

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How Americans find and use cancer information
 Health Information National Trends Survey



Background

- In recent years, there has been an 'explosion' of available cancer-related information through various media.
- The National Cancer Institute designated an *Extraordinary Opportunity in Cancer Communication* to support scientific research to advance the discipline of cancer communication.
- The Health Information National Trends Survey (HINTS) was designed as a key initiative to support this mission by providing a means to systematically evaluate the public's knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors relevant to health communication.

Study Goals

- Examine trends in the American public's:
 - use of and preference for sources of cancer information
 - experiences with cancer information seeking
 - perceptions of information efficacy
- Examine differences in information seeking by sociodemographic variables.

Methods

Data were from the 2003 and 2005 Health Information National Trends Survey (HINTS). All data were weighted to provide representative estimates to the adult U.S. population.

Measurement - Survey Items

- Information Seeking:** *Have you ever looked for cancer information from any source?*
- Sources:**
 - Actual: *The most recent time you looked for cancer information, where did you go?*
 - Preferred: *The next time you have a strong need to get information about cancer, where will you go?*
- Information Seeking Experience:** Agreement with a series of items assessing experience with information seeking was assessed.
- Efficacy:**
 - Confidence: *Overall, how confident are you that you could get advice or information about cancer if you needed it?*
 - Trust: *How much would you trust cancer information from (health care professional, family or friends, etc.)?*

Results

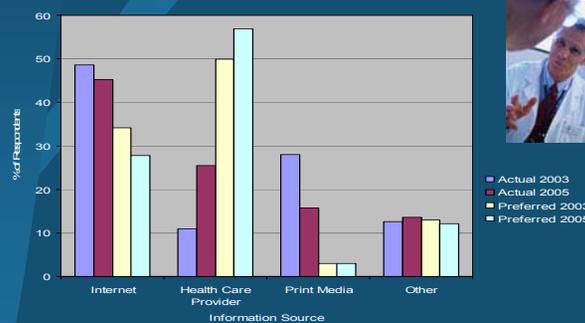
There was an increase from 2003 to 2005 in the percentage of respondents who reported looking for cancer information (44.9% to 48.8; $\Delta=3.8$, $p<0.01$).

Sociodemographic Characteristics: 2003 to 2005

(Counts & Weighted Percentages)	Demographics			
	HINTS 2003		HINTS 2005	
	N	%	N	%
Total	6369	100.00	5586	100.00
Sex				
Male	2521	48.08	1929	48.11
Female	3848	51.92	3657	51.89
Age				
18-34	1655	31.20	1037	24.93
35-49	1954	31.03	1490	28.55
50-64	1492	21.50	1522	25.26
65-79	943	12.85	1122	16.72
80+	299	3.41	397	4.54
Race/Ethnicity				
White, non-Hispanic	4276	71.76	4103	70.14
Black, non-Hispanic	716	10.49	438	10.28
Hispanic	764	11.71	496	12.82
Non-Hispanic Other	312	6.04	299	6.76
Income				
Less than \$25,000	1709	29.08	1307	25.25
\$25,000 to < \$50,000	1745	30.74	1217	26.30
\$50,000 to < \$75,000	955	17.44	924	21.16
\$75,000 or more	1214	22.75	1150	27.30
Education				
< High school	747	16.90	687	15.53
High school graduate	1828	31.99	1447	28.40
Some college	1637	26.83	1545	30.58
College graduate	1927	24.28	1696	25.49

Sources of Cancer Information

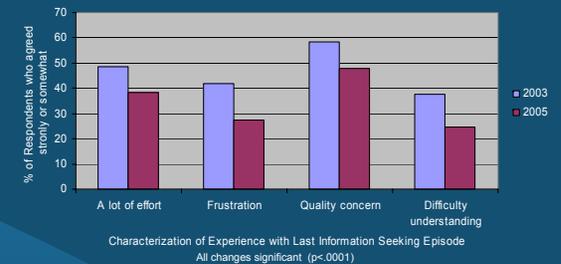
Trends in Actual and Preferred Sources of Cancer Information



Actual: Significant change ($p<0.001$) Healthcare Provider and Print Materials; Preferred: Significant change ($p<0.001$) Healthcare Provider and Internet.

Information Seeking Experiences

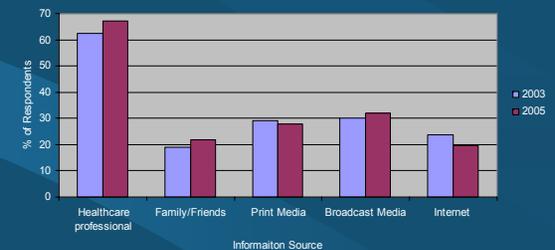
Experience with Health Information Seeking



Information Seeking Efficacy

Confidence: Overall, there was a significant increase in the percentage of respondents who reported being completely or very confident that they could get needed information about cancer from 2003 (62.6%) to 2005 (67.5%).

Percentage of Respondents who Trust Information Source "A lot"



Significant change ($p<0.1$) for healthcare professional, family and friends, print media, and Internet.

Conclusions

Trends in Cancer Communication

- Patterns of use, preference, and trust in information sources reveal increasing reliance on healthcare professionals for information and decreasing reliance on the Internet.
- Increases in confidence in information seeking and reported experiences with information seeking reveal promising trends among the American public.

Practice Implications

- HINTS provides a distinct set of measures spanning interdisciplinary areas relevant to cancer.
- With mounting prominence of health communication, and rapid changes in technology, HINTS data will be useful to practitioners, researchers, and policy makers in many disciplines and practice settings.